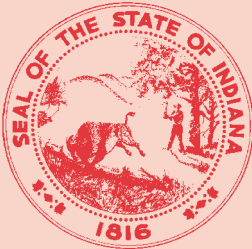


State Representative

Robert D. Kuzman

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach
Representative

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Spring, 2000

Dear Friends:

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended March 3, 2000 with the passage of many important pieces of legislation.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a distribution of tobacco settlement monies and increased worker's compensation benefits. We also increased expanded mandatory insurance coverage for certain health issues and increased unemployment compensation.

While we did have many successes this session, the Indiana General Assembly could not reach a decision on two issues which impact Lake County. Despite overwhelming support for the removal of welfare from the county, which passed the House with a vote of 83-16, and for a delay in property tax reassessment, which passed the House with a vote of 62-35, the Senate failed to pass either measure. As a sponsor of the legislation to remove the welfare burden from the county, I was very disappointed that this legislation, which would have significantly reduced the property tax burden for Lake County residents, was not successful. I will sponsor this legislation again next session.

However, despite these two setbacks, it was a successful session. Inside you will find a summary of many of the issues that were addressed during this session. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my legislative office.

Sincerely,



E-mail updates available on state legislative issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Inside this newsletter

Tobacco Settlement

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Funding for Local Projects**





Session News

School safety

School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency. In the case of an overturned school bus, officials will be able to identify the bus and find out where it is from in order to notify parents and locate medical information on students.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential. The legislation also provides that school boards may meet in private to discuss the assessment, design and implementation of school safety and security measures.

We also enacted legislation that stiffens the penalties for speeding violations near a school to a Class B infraction. The maximum penalty for this offense is \$1,000.

Legislature allocates tobacco funds

Bi-partisan agreement to help several program and groups

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

The final bill was the result of many months of work by legislators on both sides of the aisle. From the start, we have attempted to assure that most of the funding goes to health care and efforts to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

This is a considerable accomplishment for a short session of the Legislature, and it is a tribute to the willingness of officials to set aside partisan differences in order to pass bills that will have long-term benefits for the people of our state.

Senior citizens will also see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help seniors on low incomes purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.



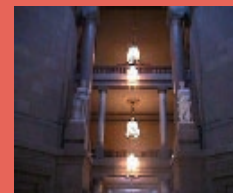
Rep. Kuzman with Gov. O'Bannon.

Research & Development

Efforts to upgrade the state's programs to attract more research and development jobs received support from the Legislature this session. We extended the life of tax credits for research and development and gave local governments more flexibility to grant abatements for new research equipment.

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about improving efforts to stop a "brain drain" of young people from our state that started because we did not have the quality high-tech jobs that would convince them to stay. With passage of this proposal, we are encouraging companies already working in Research and Development to expand their efforts while making Indiana more competitive in attracting new firms to our state.

1999 budget provided tax cuts, funding for local projects



Kuzman voted for over \$672 million in tax cuts

The 1999 biennial state budget provides \$672 million in savings for Indiana taxpayers. I have detailed some of the tax cuts below.

- **Homeowners:** Property taxes on a taxpayer's principal place of residence can be deducted up to \$2,500.
- **Senior citizens:** The income tax deduction for most seniors was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Each qualified taxpayer may take this deduction — meaning married couples may now deduct \$3,000 from their adjusted gross income. Many seniors also received an increase in the property tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$2,000.
- **Dependent children:** The income tax deduction was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500 for dependent children under age 19 and full-time students under age 24.
- **Renters:** The renters' income tax deduction was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000.
- **Small businesses:** Businesses will no longer have to "add-back" property taxes deducted on their federal returns.

Local projects help area firefighters, fairgrounds

Lake County Fairgrounds -- \$100,250

Crown Point Fire Department ambulance and equipment-- \$100,250

Lowell Fire Department -- \$100,250

Lakes of Four Seasons Fire Department equipment -- \$100,250

Shelby Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

Schneider Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

Lake Dale Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

Road Funding: 1997-2001*

	1997	1999	Total
Lake County	\$1.11 million	\$2.1 million	\$3.21 million
Cedar Lake	\$160,910	\$315,314	\$476,224
Crown Point	\$269,737	\$528,577	\$798,314
Lowell	\$104,435	\$204,650	\$309,085
Merrillville	\$467,229	\$915,570	\$1.38 million
Schneider	\$9,714	\$19,035	\$28,749
Winfield	\$34,998	\$68,578	\$68,578
Porter County		\$2.5 million	\$3.61 million
Hebron		\$95,162	\$195,162

* Funding is in addition to the regular funding from gas taxes. The amounts listed for each city are in addition to the total for the county. The amount appropriated to each city is based on the population of the city.

\$10 million

Ten Commandments

Legislators from both sides of the aisle helped pass a new law that would give state and local governments the right to display the Ten Commandments on public property.

Many legislators feel that this legislation reflects the sentiments of a majority of the people of Indiana that our country was founded on the principles contained in the Ten Commandments. Legislators expressed their views that the Ten Commandments are as important as any laws in helping define what makes this country so great.

Insurance

I am pleased to announce that legislation enacted this session will go a long way to increasing insurance coverage for a number of individuals. One change involving dental health maintenance organizations will mandate that licensed dentists be in charge of making decisions about dental claims.

Other legislation requires HMOs to cover patients for colorectal cancer testing based on standards established by the American Cancer Society. People found to be morbidly obese will receive coverage for necessary treatment, including surgery.



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***See inside to add your name to
my e-mail update group***

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State legislative web site

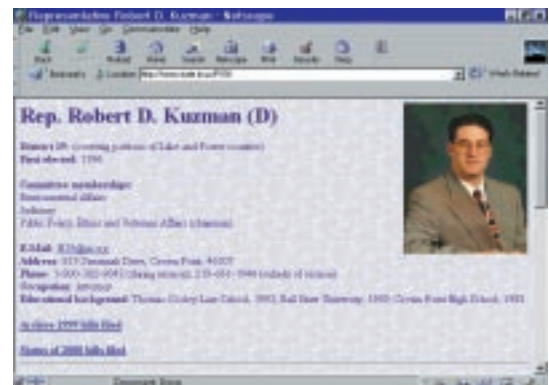
The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R19 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies, offer a guide to women's health and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000